Counterterrorism v. Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Algeria and Afghanistan

by David N Santos

Defining the Enemy

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States the terms of terrorism and insurgency have become part of the everyday American lexicon and for that matter much of the international community's as well. So common has the usage of these terms become that it would appear they are almost interchangeable if not the same. There is, however, a distinction between a terrorist and an insurgent. It is this distinction which lies at the heart of the difficulty in combating an enemy who does not look like or operate in the manner of a traditional conventional armed threat. If an enemy is identified as being irregular and not keeping with traditional enemy threat models what are the most effect methods for addressing this type of threat? Add to this complexity of combating an unclear and irregular threat the use of terrorism which adds a new dynamic to the situation. Does the presence of *terrorist* acts indicate those acts were committed by terrorists or some other type of group such as a revolutionary, an insurgent or a guerrilla?

It is a generally accepted fact that terrorism is a tactic used to allow a group the ability to achieve a desired end state. The fact that terrorism involves violence as a means to intimidate a specific audience into accepting that group's demands can actually make the overall issue of addressing a terrorist threat much more difficult. All too often the presence of violence and the necessity to provide security for a population can restrict the perspective of security forces and policy makers into focusing exclusively on the armed threat. These security forces and policy makers either ignore or neglect the real reasons for *why* a terrorist group is conducting their attacks in the first place. If we apply this concept of *why* a terrorist organization is conducting acts of violence it is easy to see a vast difference in the approaches of *counterterrorism* and *counterinsurgency*. In simple terms counterterrorism strategies are focused on ending or preventing terrorist violence plaguing a population. Whereas the counterinsurgency approach is holistic which addresses not only the armed threat but also seeks to identify and improve the root causes motivating terror organizations. In the end, the counterinsurgency approach offers a greater possibility for confronting an armed threat through the ability in addressing the root causes of violence through specific lines of effort. When a government or military organization looks to choose a strategy to address an irregular threat, care must be given not only to whether the strategy will achieve the stated objectives but what will be the ensuing tactical, strategic and diplomatic results of implementing that strategy.

Distinguishing a terrorist from an insurgent

Well known author and journalist Bruce Hoffman (2006) describes terrorism as "often confused or equated with, or treated as synonymous with, guerrilla warfare and insurgency" (p.

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35). This is a point that cannot be over emphasized as all three of the previously mentioned groups often use similar methods of attacks such as; bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, etc… when conducting their operations. Another similarity among these groups is their lack of use of a formal military uniform which would allow them to be easily distinguished from a civilian population (Hoffman, 2006, p.35). This inability of readily distinguishing terrorists, insurgents and guerrillas from the civilian population plus the common usage of similar tactics presents those combating these elements a significant challenge. When examining each of these three groups it is easy to see those identified as guerrillas and insurgents have more in common with one another. Terrorists, however, could be classified as being in a category of their own or in some ways the opposite of guerrillas and insurgents.

Guerrillas commonly operate within some type of military structure and conduct operations designed to achieve a military objective such as attacking a conventional military force, seize and retain territory and apply civil administration over that territory (Hoffman, 2006). Guerrillas serve as a force multiplier for a traditional conventional army. Guerillas assist conventional armies through their identification and subsequent attacks on an enemy's rear echelon areas at vital logistics areas or command and control centers. The actions of guerrilla organizations can force an opposing army to commit more forces than anticipated to securing these rear areas.

Insurgents are a slight variation from guerrillas. An insurgent use many of the same tactics as the guerrilla but operate separately from an established conventional army. Insurgents conduct their operations in the pursuit of a specific political objective. An insurgency is often conducted as an "organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government" (US Army Field Manual 3-24). Insurgents are generally individuals from within a specific state who wish to overthrow the existing government and install a new one in line with their political beliefs and objectives. Due to the political nature of insurgencies, they have in the past been commonly referred to as revolutionary guerrilla warfare, modern revolutionary warfare or peoples war (Hoffman, 2006). Regardless of the term used to describe them, insurgencies are at heart a people's movement. Who the *people* are in these movements is often an issue for debate. Insurgent organizations also make great use of propaganda or information operations in order to garner support for their cause from among the civilian population they are operating in. The use of information operations is a key element to an insurgent's operations. The insurgent must effectively communicate his beliefs and ideology to a civilian population in order to gain acceptance and support for that ideology. The insurgent has to maintain continuous communications with the population and overwhelm them to prevent them from accepting and supporting a counterinsurgent message. Through this constant flow of communication of his ideology an insurgent can exercise control over a population.

Terrorist organizations are unique and much more complex when compared with guerrillas and insurgents. Unlike guerrillas and insurgents there is no *single* factor that can be attributed as the cause for uniting individuals to commit acts of violence. Terrorists could be motivated as a result of a multitude of issues to include grievances with the existing socio-economic or political environment of a specific state government or region within the international community. Adding to the complexity of understanding the dynamics of terrorist organizations is their use of some of the same tactics for violent action used by guerillas and insurgents. However, there is one important differentiating fact about terrorists which is their specific targeting of the civilian population of a particular society. Terrorists make use of fear

brought on as the result of violence or through the threat of violence within a population. The purpose of this fear is to force the target population (or specified group) to conform to a set of demands.

One of the critical aspects for the continued existence of each of these groups is their ability to gain the support of the local populations they operate in. Each of these groups relies on the civilian population for sanctuary and, material support, as well as information on the group's adversaries. The importance of the relationship between the civilian population with each of these groups is vital as Mao Tse-tung articulated comparing it to a fish's need for water (Trinquier, 2006). There is one important point that distinguishes the terrorist from the insurgent and guerrilla. This distinction is the terrorist's lack of hesitation in using violence against a civilian population. It is true that the terrorist relies on a civilian population in the same manner for support as the insurgent or guerrilla. However, the terrorist more freely uses violence specifically directed at a civilian population if they believe that population is not providing them the needed support. Terrorist violence in turn creates an environment of fear among the population which is further manipulated by the terrorist organization in order to achieve, at a minimum, civilian compliance with their demands. The terrorist seeks to impose his will and dominate a population through the use of violence if gaining acceptance from that population proves to be futile (Trinquier, 2006).

One of the similarities between terrorism and insurgencies is that both are motivated to achieve a specific political objective or agenda. In the case of terrorism as Bruce Hoffman (2006) explains, terrorism is used as a means to bring to the practitioner power within a political system and society to force a desired political change (p. 2). Therefore, the use of terrorist violence or equally important the threat of violence is at its core designed to achieve some type of political change. It is important to note that although terrorist violence maybe used to achieve a political objective it is not done without purpose or direction. In many cases terrorist organizations operate with limited amounts of and access to the materials needed for conducting violent acts. As a result, terrorist violence has to be preplanned, coordinated and systematic acts in order to maximize the resources available (Hoffman, 2006). In this context, terrorism should to be viewed as a method for achieving a desired objective. Terrorism, therefore in this context, is a tactic not an ideology.

Roger Trinquier (2006) who served as an intelligence officer with the French paratroopers in Indochina and Algeria during the 1950s and 1960s described the role of terrorism as a method of what he described as *modern warfare*. What Trinquier (2006) was describing with his use of the phrase modern warfare is what we would define as an insurgency, the process for the removal of one regime to be replaced with another. Trinquier (2006) saw terrorism as a method for those practitioners of modern warfare (insurgents) to be used to secure control over a specific population. As mentioned previously, the support of a local population is vital to a terrorist. Trinquier (2006) states the use of violence is a terrorist's means for ensuring continued support of a civilian population. Through maintaining a continual state of fear, intimidation and coercion, terrorists can control and manipulate a civilian population. Similar to guerrilla warfare, terrorism is a method or style of conducting violent acts which can be employed by various types of organizations, both conventional and irregular. Care must be given when analyzing acts of violence that may be concluded as terrorism. Though the particular violent act may be classified as terrorism, the group responsible is not always considered to be a terrorist organization. To determine a group's classification analysis must go beyond their acts of violence and look at

their specific motivations. Another valid point Trinquier (2006) makes is the manner in which to identify an adversary, in this case a terrorist, is of great importance. Trinquier (2006) contends that the absence of a declared war (that is a declared state of action against a terrorist organization) will allow that organization to grow and build support within a state's legal system. Once acts of terrorist violence such as assassinations, bombings or kidnappings occur, those believed to be responsible must be declared hostile and pursued. Once the enemy has be identified a strategy can be developed and adopted to combat that threat.

Picking a Strategy: Counterterrorism v. Counterinsurgency

What does the term strategy mean? Merriam-Webster defines it as "the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy). In simple terms, a strategy is a process that focuses on understanding the root causes of a specific event or situation in order to develop a plan to address those root causes in a timely and effective manner. When looking at *counterterrorism* and *counterinsurgency* as a form of strategy it must be understood that there is a distinct difference between the two. The use of the term counterterrorism today evokes an image of a broad overarching strategy designed to address the threat of terrorism that exists both domestically and internationally. Upon closer examination of the term itself, focus must be given to the first part of the word which is *counter;* which indicates a specific action taken to address an event, thus making that action more reactionary in nature.

Counterterrorism as a strategy is predominately one which is focused on reacting to a terrorist event and preventing a future event. Wyn Rees and Richard Aldrich (2005) highlighted the reactionary nature of a counterterrorism strategy by emphasizing the three principle categories of counterterrorism as it is used today which include (1) military led retaliatory and preemptive action, (2) regulatory measures that strengthen law enforcement and judicial functions to punish terrorist suspects and (3) measures taken which would appease a terrorist threat through concessions on specific issues. A counterterrorism strategy is truly a tactical level strategy or more specifically a method. That is, counterterrorism seeks to remove the physical terrorist threat, either through the use of force or legal action. However, a counterterrorism strategy is not typically designed to address the root causes that allow a terrorist threat to develop and exist in the first place. This is perhaps one of the most significant drawbacks with relying solely on a counterterrorism approach. It is this limited view of addressing a terrorist threat that shaped the French Army's perspective in their efforts to combat the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) in Algeria during the 1950s and early 1960s.

For the French Army, counterterrorism as a strategy was composed primarily of military retaliatory and preemptive action. The main purpose of French Army actions and policy in Algeria from 1954-1962 was to meet violence with greater violence in an attempt to break the will of the FLN movement. The French desire to crush the FLN was caused in part to the violence being perpetrated throughout Algeria against French Army forces and European settlers (commonly referred to as *pieds noir)* by FLN fighters. This violence by the FLN removed all possibilities, at least initially, for a concession to their demands by the French authorities in Paris. The situation in Algeria would be complicated further by the decision to subjugate Algerian police authority to the French Army particularly during the period of the Battle of Algiers in 1957.

The French conception of a counterterrorism strategy in Algeria would lead to a significant failure, the inability to gain the support of the local population, in particular the Muslim population. The lack of regard for the manner in which the Muslim Algerian population was treated by French forces demonstrated a lack of understanding of the population, their culture and the overall socio-economic and political environment the French Army was operating in. This lack of cultural awareness by the French Army and their excessive heavy handed tactics only served to worsen the situation. The French chose to focus their efforts primarily on the security situation within Algeria. Undoubtedly security is of a significant concern but it is one of many issues that need to be addressed in order to remove not only the physical threat but the social conditions which feed its cause. The U.S. Army was presented with a similar terrorist threat and complex social environment in Afghanistan as the French Army faced in Algeria. During the early years of the US occupation of Afghanistan following the initial invasion in October of 2001, U.S. military forces were primarily concerned with countering the terrorist threat from the deposed Taliban regime and the al Qaeda terrorist network. However, unlike the French, the U.S. army began to relook its strategy in Afghanistan once the security situation began to deteriorate in the wake of increasing Taliban violence and span of influence.

Algeria during the 1950s along with the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan can be referred to as examples of insurgencies. In both cases, an armed organization within the population resorted to violence against the existing government authority in order to bring about a change in that government. The acts of violence which are common with insurgencies often cause counterinsurgents (government forces) to focus too exclusively on the security situation. What can occur, and which did in Algeria and initially in Afghanistan, is a virtual war of attrition with both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent exacting violence on one another in order to destroy the other's will to fight. Inevitably, insurgencies seek to gain control of one of the most important aspects of any society, the population. In both Algeria and Afghanistan the civilian populations were caught in the middle between the insurgency and the counterinsurgent forces of the government authorities. It is the significance of the role the civilian population plays that the French Army and authorities failed to recognize and that U.S. military and civilian leaders have only truly embraced within the last few years.

The occurrence of insurgencies is as old as warfare itself. Perhaps the most basic and universal principle of insurgencies is the significance of a political ideology which fuels the insurgency (FM 3-24, 2006). Although there are numerous forms of insurgencies there are some basic elements common to all. These elements include but are not limited to (1) the movement leaders, (2) combatants (paramilitary organizations), (3) Political cadre (the political party/ideology driving the insurgency), (4) auxiliaries (those providing material support, intelligence, sanctuary, etc...) and (5) the mass base (the rank and file of the insurgency) (FM 3-24, 2006). Identifying and targeting these elements within an insurgency is significant in allowing government forces the ability to gain control of the security situation.

As difficult as insurgencies can prove to be to defeat they are not without their own vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities, if identified and exploited can serve to help improve the security situation and social conditions within a society. Some of the more common vulnerabilities of insurgencies are the need for secrecy, difficulties in distributing a coherent mobilizing message, the need for a base of operations, internal confrontations, reliance on external material and financial support, and informants from within the organization (FM 3-24, 2006). Here again are examples of issues that once addressed could add to an increased security

situation. If the elements and vulnerabilities listed above are addressed, the physical threat posed by the insurgency can be diminished. If conducted properly a counterterrorism strategy can be used to identify and target the elements and vulnerabilities of an insurgency. In this manner counterterrorism is a specific strategy within a larger more encompassing counterinsurgency strategy. However, a truly successful counterinsurgency strategy is one that will encompass not only the security aspect but also address the political, economic and social conditions of a society which are perpetuating an insurgency. A lack of understanding by counterinsurgent forces of the strategic impact of an insurgency and a continued focus on the tactical fight will only lead to increasing the influence and appeal of insurgent ideology and propaganda.

Violence is only part of the problem

Importance of identifying key issues

When writing on the nature of counterinsurgency operations employed by the British Army in Malaya during the late 1950s and 1960s, Sir Robert Thompson stated a counterinsurgency strategy is a "persistently methodical approach" using "steady pressure which will wear the insurgent down" (FM 3-24, 2006, p. 5-1). One of the key points of a counterinsurgency strategy is the role and importance of the government that is combating the insurgency. This government may receive external support (materially, economically, and militarily) but ultimately to be successful that government has to address the core social issues driving the insurgency itself. No external support can resolve these issues. To achieve success a government needs to identify the driving ideology or strategy of the insurgency in order to know what areas of society need to be focused on. Identifying the elements of an insurgency's ideology will allow a government to better focus its time and resources to achieve maximum results (FM 3-24, 2006). A government must also be realistic in its approach to securing territory controlled or influenced by the insurgency. As Andrew Krepinevich (2005) argues governments should follow an "oil spot strategy" to help focus efforts in securing specific areas (such as cities) in multiple locations and gradually expand their influence and control from these areas. Key to this particular strategy is the ability to maintain continuous security for the population of the areas a government regains from the insurgency. Failing in this aspect will only allow the insurgency to reinsert themselves into previously cleared areas.

A government's ability to maintain and expand security in areas previously controlled by the insurgency will serve to increase its legitimacy within the population as well solidify its support base. Maintaining government control over areas where the insurgency had an influence requires the identification and dismantlement of not only the insurgent's ability to commit violence but also his administrative and support structures (FM 3-24, 2006). A failure to remove this support structure will only allow the insurgency the ability to rebuild the capabilities it lost and maintain their capacity for conducting violent attacks within that area.

As mentioned previously the need for gaining support of the local population by the insurgent and counterinsurgent is vital to success for both. One method for achieving this support is through the use of propaganda or targeted information operations (IO) to a specific audience. The purpose of these propaganda and IO messages is to discredit one another in the eyes of the population, explain the purpose of their cause, and garner local and international support. This area in particular proved to be either very difficult or of lesser importance to the French Army in Algeria. Likewise the U.S. Army has experienced great difficult at times matching or countering Taliban propaganda. In the case of Afghanistan the issue of the validity

of the message is of lesser importance to the Taliban than to be the first one to report "the facts" of an incident that took place. This action by the Taliban has consistently put the U.S. Army behind the power curve because as the search for true and accurate facts takes place their counter message is delayed. The longer it takes to produce a response to an incident the more credibility the Taliban version gets from the population. Dominating the message fight will over time attack the credibility of the insurgency to the point where messages can go unnoticed.

The concept of a counterinsurgency strategy, and in a limited sense a counterterrorism strategy, encompasses numerous areas of concern (security, economics, political, governance, etc…) that need to be addressed continuously at the same time. It is true that a certain degree of security should be established within an area before placing significant effort into addressing the other social conditions. However, if increasing security is pursued without at least a minimal effort in the other social aspects little to no progress will be made in combating an insurgency or terrorist threat. The U.S. Army refers to these multiple areas of concern as Lines of Operation (LOO) (FM 3-24, 2006). The ultimate goal, or endstate, of these LOOs is to restore and strengthen a government's ability to not only gain public support but provide for the needs of the population. For the French Army in Algeria the endstate was to end the violence perpetrated by the FLN, removal of the FLN and strengthening of French authority throughout Algeria. For the U.S. Army in Afghanistan the endstate is more complex. In Afghanistan the government is not yet capable for combating the insurgency while successfully providing for the social needs of their population. As a result, the U.S. Army, and numerous civilian agencies, has to assist the Afghan Government in achieving success in all of these areas. When developing a LOO for a specific social issue it must be keep in mind that achieving the endstate associated with this LOO allow for increased success in the other LOOs which together will achieve the overall objective of the counterinsurgency strategy.

Identifying the Center of Gravity

A center of gravity is something (a person, place, object or capability) that is needed in order to ensure success of a desired action. The concept of identifying a center of gravity is not new and was in fact addressed by one of history's foremost military theorists Carl von Clausewitz in his classic work *On War*. Clausewitz believed there were multiple characteristics used and required by two opposing entities that facilitated their ability to further a conflict. Clausewitz stated these characteristics were necessary to be identified and understood in order to develop actions to attack them. Clausewitz argued that from these "characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, upon which everything depends. That is the point against which all of our energies should be directed" (Howard & Paret, 1976, p. 595-596).

Rarely is there a single center of gravity upon which all aspects of an insurgency or terrorist threat depend upon. It is more likely to identify multiple centers of gravity within specific areas which if addressed collectively can ultimately change the course of an insurgency or terrorist threat. On this point Clausewitz added "the first principle is that the ultimate substance of enemy strength must be traced back to the fewest possible sources, and ideally one alone. The attack on these sources must be compressed into the fewest possible actions" (Howard & Paret, 1976, p. 617). The sources Clausewitz is referring to here is similar to identifying the Lines of Operation (LOOs), those key and essential conditions in society that need to be addressed to successfully combat an insurgency. Likewise this same approach can be taken as part of a counterterrorism strategy. Although a counterterrorism strategy is narrower in

its scope it is still essential to identify those key elements or vulnerabilities to successfully target a terrorist threat. For a counterterrorism approach emphasis would be given to identifying terrorist leaders, sources of financial and logistical support as well as bomb makers to name a few. The difference with a counterinsurgency strategy is the centers of gravity associated with a counterterrorism approach would be incorporated as part of one Line of Operation in a strategy with multiple lines of operation.

The Algerian Quagmire 1954-1962

All Saints Day 1954

On November 1, 1954 a few hundred Algerian Muslim rebels left their base camps in the Aures Mountains of northeast Algeria and launched a series of attacks. These attacks were directed against French military and police installations as well as private properties of those deemed as Muslim collaborators (Horne, 1976). These attacks would lead to a greater uprising and ever increasing violence which would scar the Algerian landscape for the next eight years and be commonly referred to as the French-Algerian War. The timing of these attacks was truly significant for a number of reasons. First, on a strategic level the attacks took place only a matter of months following the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in Indochina which lead to France's subsequent withdrawal. This was a major blow to the French psyche and national prestige. Algeria was not the first French possession in North Africa to push for independence from France. Both Tunisia and French Morocco had successfully broken from France only a few years prior to the All Saints day uprising. A second significant reason for the choice of All Saints Day was more for tactical purposes. All Saints Day is a Catholic festival that celebrated the persecutions of early Christians. The Muslim rebels responsible for the attacks believed the Christian European *pieds noir* settlers would be busy celebrating this festival and thus have a limited readiness posture (Horne, 1977). This attention to detail in understanding cultural aspects of an opponent is precisely the level of analysis a government combating an insurgency needs to adopt because the insurgent or terrorist will use these cultural nuances to maximize the effectiveness of their attacks.

A tactical approach with strategic implications

Although the loss of Indochina, Tunisia and other former colonies were a significant blow to French prestige none compared to the importance of Algeria. The other territories were merely colonies, whereas Algeria itself was an actual province of France the same as Normandy or Burgundy. So when the rebel movement took shape in 1954 the ensuing conflict was not a colony trying to gain independence but a province trying to break away. Algeria had been under French control since 1830 and considered a province since the 1870s after France's humiliating defeat to the new German Empire and the loss of the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. Although considered an actual province of France, Algeria was not equally administered under French law. There were noticeable differences in the socio-economic and political conditions of the Muslim native population of Algeria and the European peids noir settlers (Horne, 1977). The attitude of unwillingness to compromise in the case of Algeria permeated from the highest levels of the French government. In November 1954 Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France announced in a speech to Parliament his intention for not compromising on the Algerian issue (Aussaresses, 2001). Echoing the Prime Minister's position was Interior Minister Francois Mitterand when he announced to Parliament "I will not agree to negotiate with the enemies of the homeland. The only negotiation is war" (Aussaresses, 2001, p. 2). Mitterand, who was responsible for the

administration of Algeria, declared the local police authorities within Algeria were not capable of meeting the emerging terrorist threat and requested regular French Army forces (Aussaresses, 2001).

From the outset of violence it is clear the French authorities were more interested in pursuing a counterterrorism strategy using a military response to suppress the violence and rid Algeria of the rebel threat. Perhaps the best example of the counterterrorism strategy the French Army used was seen during the Battle of Algiers from January to September 1957. By January of 1957 rebellion in Algeria was in full swing but had for the most part been fought primarily in the countryside. By early 1957 the FLN had made to move to increase its wave of violence to the cities. Since Algiers was the capital city of Algeria, French authorities recognized the importance of maintaining control and order within that particular city. The plan for securing Algiers included the deployment of the 10th Paratrooper Division (DP) consisting of six parachute regiments to reestablish control. One significant fact about the use of the 10th DP in Algiers was its commander, Major General Jasques Massu.

The significance of looking at Massu is the tone he set regarding the security situation within Algiers. In addition to the visible presence of the French paratroopers within the city through their checkpoints, arrests, searches and raids they conducted, Massu allowed for the use of some immoral and unethical tactics to be employed. Massu allowed for the use of torture and summary execution of hundreds if not thousands of Muslim civilians within Algiers (Aussaresses, 2001). Some of the techniques and abuses inflicted by the French paratroopers were captured in the book *La Question* by Henri Alleg, editor of a pro-communist paper in Algiers. Alleg had been arrested due to his associations with the communist movement in Algeria who were believed to be sympathetic to the FLN cause. Alleg described his month long ordeal of repeated beatings, waterboarding and exposure to electric shock torture through the use bare ended electrical wires being placed in his mouth and then having electricity turned on to the wires (Alleg, 1958).

Arguably one of the fears the French Army and civilian authorities had concerned the danger of "a few organized and well-trained men of action" carrying "out a reign of terror in the big cities (Trinquier, 2006, p. 20). Violence was not the only issue of interest, there was concern the French legal system would protect the rebels by having them recognized as common criminals as opposed to terrorists. As Roger Trinquier (2006) pointed out "the peacetime laws gave our enemies maximum opportunities for evading pursuit; it was vital to them that legality be strictly applied" (p. 40). The French Army's solution to this issue was to assume control of police authority during the major fighting in Algiers. With their involvement in policing activities the French Army could then identify those individuals within police files as suspected terrorists and deal with them accordingly, often outside the realm of French law.

Tactical victories do not equal strategic success

The French Army's methods in Algeria and in Algiers in particular can be viewed as nothing more than a failure. At the tactical level the methods used by the French Army did provide some success especially within Algiers itself. By September 1957 the 10th DP had disrupted the FLN network there from having the ability to maintain their campaign of violence. Where the French failed was at the strategic and diplomatic levels. However, the French tactics during the battle for Algiers did produce some horrific acts of terrorism upon the civilian population both Muslim and European. As the French Army pursued the FLN, terrorist violence

against the European settlers rose and in response the pieds noir exacted the same level of violence on the Muslim population. Strategically, the French missed an opportunity to use the Muslim population as a means to help shape a new form of administration for Algeria which could have included socio-economic and political reforms. The policy of no compromising only served to drive a wedge between the French authorities, along with the pieds noir, and the Muslim population making any future chance of compromise or reconciliation unlikely.

The French Army failed to understand or appreciate the culture they were operating in and in doing so did not recognize the potential advantages of leveraging that culture to meet their policy objectives. Diplomatically, France suffered a serious blow to their image within the international community due to the heavy handed tactics of the French Army. The rampant use of torture, summary executions and oppressive policing methods generated condemnation within France as well as the international community. Most notably, a junior Senator from Massachusetts named John F. Kennedy made finding a resolution to the Algerian issue one of his main focus points. Upon his election to the Presidency in 1960, Kennedy threatened to remove all support from France unless they granted Algeria independence (Gallagher, 2002). In 1962 after nearly eight years of war a "demoralized and destabilized, France eventually decided to withdraw, despite having won a military victory in the cities and settled rural areas " (Gallagher, 2002) Algeria was granted independence. The heavy handed tactics and lack of cultural understanding exhibited by the French Army and civilian authorities only worsened their predicament and intensified rebel violence and resistance.

America in the Graveyard of Empires: Afghanistan Post 9/11

Failure to learn from the past

In October of 2001 the United States launched the first military operation following the events of September 11th, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), to attack the sanctuary and al Qaeda network responsible for the deaths of over 3,000 Americans. At the time of these initial actions the United States had no clear conception of the undertaking it was about to enter into. The United States sought to attack the al Qaeda network and induce a change in government in Afghanistan to remove the oppressive Taliban regime. What the United States failed to recognize was not only the how to create a new government but also the how to combat an insurgency at the same time. This lack of a clear understanding of the steps to create a functional government and one deemed to be legitimate in the eyes of the population led the U.S. Army to focus primarily on the tactical or security situation. From the beginning of OEF there was a desire by Pentagon officials to maintain a "limited footprint" (Goodson, 2004) within Afghanistan. This limited presence of US forces within Afghanistan contributed to a "single-minded dedication on a mission of pursuing al Qa'ida and the Taliban, largely avoiding "peacekeeping" or "nation building" operations" (Goodson, 2004). The US Army furthered the deteriorating security situation with its limited footprint allowing regional warlords to step in and gather control of the areas with no US or Coalition presence.

Just like the French Army in Algeria, the US Army in the early years of the war in Afghanistan failed to completely grasp the complexities of the geographical and cultural environment it was now operating in. This lack of understanding of the operating environment coupled with a single mindedness of focusing primarily on security allowed for the Afghan society to stagnate then deteriorate further. By early 2003 the situation in Afghanistan was becoming dire. The security situation was worsening with not only the rise of regional warlord

control but Taliban influence and outright control over a growing number of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. The interim government of Hamid Karzai was having limited success within Kabul and virtually no control or influence outside the city (Goodson, 2004). The rise of poppy production and drug trafficking complicated not only the economic but also the security situations by increasing organized crime, empowering regional warlords and serving as a source of income for the deposed Taliban. Unfortunately, the difficulties with Afghanistan itself were not the only ones the US Army would have to contend with. Starting in March 2003 the Army would find itself fighting in an additional conflict, this one in Iraq. For nearly the next six years the Army's main focus would shift to the war in Iraq and would divert badly needed troops, supplies and intelligence collection assets for the war in Afghanistan.

A change of mindset

Beginning in 2003 the US Army began to realize not only were they losing control of the security situation but also the socio-economic and political situations as well. Unlike Algeria, Afghanistan had virtually no functioning infrastructure both physically as well as administratively. The situation in Algeria presented the French Army commanders the ability to take advantage of a functioning municipal administrative and policing infrastructure already in place from which to use for supporting their operations. Afghanistan did not offer these same opportunities. Not only was there a need to improve the security situation through combating the threat posed by the Taliban and al Qaeda but also a need for restructuring of the country's social apparatus and governing institutions. To fill the gap in the lack of capabilities available within Afghanistan, Pentagon officials decided to institute the concept of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) to be the link between the United States reconstruction efforts and the Afghan population. The PRTs are civil-military organizations composed of both members of the US Army as well as civilian subject matter experts from United States Government agencies such as Department of State and USAID along with individuals from various Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations. Each of these civilian experts is intended to bring knowledge and expertise in a specific area such as governance, rule of law, economics or construction (Abbaszadeh, 2008).

Unfortunately, the reconstruction efforts pursued by the PRTs were not synchronized with the US Army's combat objectives. In many cases when these organizations did manage to work together they both failed to achieve a balance between military and civilian objectives which then typically defaulted to the military objectives (Goodson, 2002). The result of this failed synchronization of efforts allowed for only minor successes to be achieved in improving the security situation and furthering Afghanistan's reconstruction. With the Army's combat units and the PRTs attempting to achieve their own stated objectives separately they ended up countering each other's efforts and inhibiting progress in either area.

There were a number factors leading to this disjointed effort of making progress within Afghanistan. First, a lack of commitment by the Army's combat units to acknowledge any missions other than identifying and killing the enemy forced reconstruction to assume a secondary role. Many commanders did not want to be involved in the nation building efforts necessary to furthering the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Second, it would not be until December 2006 that the Army would formally publish a Field Manual that specified the process for how to implement a Counterinsurgency strategy. Third, a lack of cultural awareness by the US Army in understanding the local languages (Dari and Pushtun), customs and history of the Afghan people along with heavy handed methods at the tactical level only widened the gap

between US Soldiers and the Afghan civilians. Finally, after the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 the vast majority of resources (personnel, supplies, and intelligence capabilities) were diverted to Iraq. The war in Afghanistan essentially became a "forgotten war" with a rapidly deteriorating situation.

Will the surge work? It did for Iraq

On December 1, 2009 in a speech delivered from West Point, New York President Barak Obama outlined his new strategy and commitment for the war in Afghanistan. Integral to this new strategy was the deployment of some 30,000 additional troops to assist in getting the security situation under control. Additionally, the Obama Administration picked General David H. Petraeus to serve as the new US commander in Afghanistan. General Petraeus's selection was significant due to his involvement in writing the Army's manual for Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, FM 3-24, as well as his successful application of these COIN principles in Iraq from 2007-2008 which are widely credited for turning the situation in Iraq around from the brink of disaster.

The decision to send additional combat forces to Afghanistan for a "surge" comes with the hope of achieving the same success as in Iraq when President George W. Bush ordered 30,000 troops to deploy in support of the Baghdad Security Plan in January 2007. Success in Iraq came after US military commanders and the civilian leadership recognized the need for ensuring all of their lines of effort to improve security, rebuild Iraq's infrastructure and governing institutions along with training of Iraqi security forces were conducted simultaneously and mutually supported each other. The increase in the number of combat troops in Baghdad allowed for the US Army to saturate a specific area with overwhelming combat power to get the security situation under control and set conditions to allow for long term reconstruction efforts to take root. Key to the success of the surge was the preparing of Iraqi security forces to assume responsibility for the security mission. In the case of Afghanistan, the objective is the same as in Iraq. General Petraeus now has to identify those lines of effort which are specific to Afghanistan but once addressed will facilitate the strengthening of the Afghan Government, continue reconstruction and prepare Afghan security forces for assuming full control for the security of their country.

The use of a counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, similar to the Iraq model, with clearly identified, articulated, and mutually supporting lines of effort will bring greater focus and unity for improving security and rebuilding of Afghanistan. This refined focus has shown greater cooperation involving the PRTs, NGOs and US Army combat units. Additionally, greater interagency cooperation among the various US agencies operating in Afghanistan with each other as well as with US Army units has brought increased synchronization of security and reconstruction efforts. Only time will tell if the "Afghan Surge" worked but it is clear that a focused counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan has brought greater clarity and focus on the objectives to be achieved and the process of how to achieve them. The US mission in Afghanistan is having greater success today in addressing the security situation as well as rebuilding the country than in previous years.

When reviewing the US effort in Afghanistan US policy makers and critics of the war have to be realistic in their expectations of results. The situation in Afghanistan deteriorated over the course of seven to eight years and it is unrealistic to believe the massive change and improvement sought by some will be possible to achieve in an 18-24 month period. What is

important is the strategy currently in place is demonstrating success and given the opportunity will likely continue to produce results. Additionally, success in Iraq does not equal success in Afghanistan. The countries have vast differences in terrain, culture and current capabilities as a society. These are some of the factors that should be considered when identifying what success in Afghanistan will be.

Tactically the US Army, like their French counterparts, won and continue to win the unit level engagements with the Taliban and al Qaeda networks. However, dominating the tactical level fight will not bring certain victory. From the strategic perspective the US mission in Afghanistan redefined itself numerous times. The current iteration appears to have a greater understanding of the complexities of the environment and the holistic approach needed to address the numerous issues within Afghan society. The United States will continue to have difficulties if their message for partnership with the Afghan people and a desire to see a stable, secure and economically independent Afghanistan it is not clearly articulated. Diplomatically, the US mission in Afghanistan can be viewed as being successful overall. This is not say there have not been challenges in the past in terms of partnerships with other states assisting in Afghanistan. The ability for the United States to turn involvement in Afghanistan from a situation of unilateral action to building and maintaining a coalition supporting efforts for improved security and reconstruction of Afghanistan is a diplomatic success. Although, there have been challenges in coordinating the efforts of all the contributing states of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) there has been progress within Afghanistan.

Thoughts for the Future

The nature of war and the types of conflicts that have occurred over the last three decades has changed significantly. No longer are massed armored formations along the Fulda Gap or the potential for the use of offensive nuclear weapons by a conventional military force the main threats to security within the international community. Today's threat is not readily identified through a specific uniform or form of weapon system. Instead the international community is confronted with an irregular threat that will use violence in multiple forms to include acts of violence directed at civilian populations. These irregular threats lack the restraint of a traditional conventional military and have a greater potential for committing acts of violence directed at multiple areas within a society. A key task to addressing an irregular threat is to identify exactly who and what the enemy is before attempting to develop a plan to address the threat itself. Understanding the type of violence being used can be beneficial in identifying potential motivations for why the violence occurred in the first place. Classifying an act of violence as terrorism does not exclusively mean a terrorist organization committed that act.

A complete understanding of the threat will allow decision makers to choose the appropriate strategy to address that threat. However, before choosing a strategy the specific objectives which the strategy is meant to achieve have to be clearly articulated. These goals, once articulated, will allow decision makers to determine how broad or narrow the strategy needs to be based on the issues that are to be addressed. If the desired objective is the identification and destruction of a terrorist threat, a counterterrorism strategy may be appropriate. On the other hand, if a threat to security is one of many issues which need to be addressed perhaps a counterinsurgency strategy would be in order. Regardless of what the strategy may be used, decision makers must be aware of the potential risks that strategy will have at the tactical, strategic and diplomatic levels. A successful strategy is not limited exclusively to one of these levels but should allow for some form of success at all three levels.

The French Army failed to understand this concept in Algeria by focusing too much on combating the FLN threat and not addressing the root causes that allowed the FLN to exist in the first place. The US Army had a similar experience in Afghanistan during the first few years of the conflict. However, over time by witnessing a continually deteriorating security situation the US Army recognized the need to adjust its strategy in Afghanistan. The shift in strategy the US Army implemented emphasized addressing multiple issues within Afghanistan's society beyond just the security situation. This shift in strategy allowed the US Army to combat the physical threat posed by the Taliban and al Qaeda networks while at the same time address those issues that fostered support for these organizations. Regardless of the specific nature of an irregular threat it must be remembered that combating violence is only part of the solution. The how and why an irregular threat exists must to be identified and addressed if true lasting success is to be achieved.

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